

Carol Coles

From: Carol Coles
Sent: Wednesday, April 11, 2012 3:12 PM
To: *everyone; _Council Members; Andy Rieger; Eddie Sims; Jane Cannon; Joy Hampton; Norman News; Oklahoma Daily; OU Nightly
Subject: Personal Preparedness Saves Lives

City of Norman
201 West Gray
Norman, Oklahoma 73069

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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The City of Norman Emergency Management supports the “Shelter in Place” concept. One concern is families leaving a home to go to a shelter. “Too often, families are waiting for the outdoor warning sirens to sound, by then it is really too late to properly react to the conditions”, Chief Fullingim, Norman’s Emergency Manager and Fire Chief said. Knowing how to shelter in place and create a personal preparedness plan is essential, he said.

The Emergency Weather Locations operated by the City of Norman are usually opened prior to the anticipated tornado warning when possible. These locations are not rated to any FEMA standard as shelters; primarily these locations are identified for those in mobile homes or are caught in the storm by other circumstances. The family emergency plan should address the process for the family to determine when to leave their mobile home and vacate to a better location. With the exception of identifiable Service Animals, animals are not allowed in the facilities. “Many times citizens bring several pets with them to the facility. For health and safety reasons animals should not be brought into the facility”, Fullingim said. “All available space is needed to accommodate the citizens and animals may cause problems for those with allergies or other special conditions” he indicated. Individuals with service animals are usually aware of the support needed for their animal and provide for it themselves.

Recent weather conditions reminds us it is that time again to prepare for severe weather, indicated Chief Fullingim, Norman’s Fire Chief and Emergency Manager. “This time of year we would like to remind the citizens of Norman to check the batteries in their NOAA weather radio, update their emergency preparedness kits and review their family emergency plans”, he said. A major change over recent years in preparing for severe weather has been the creation of applications that can be downloaded on a smart phone. “But these applications must also be reviewed to make sure they are up to date and the settings are correct”, stated the Chief.

Awareness of the current weather conditions have become more readily available over the last few years with many internet based web sites, weather applications from the National Weather Service, applications for smart phones and the use of portable NOAA weather radios. All of these sources are utilized in the Emergency Operations Center to include monitoring the local weather media for live reporting, indicated the Chief. “Awareness is the key to being prepared”, said Chief Fullingim.

When the conditions are present for the decision to sound the sirens, it is really the last asset the City of Norman has to provide any type of warning to the citizens. Typically the sirens are sounded based on weather conditions that pose an immediate threat of a tornado striking the City. The sirens are primarily an outdoor warning system and are not intended to wake citizens in the middle of the night or be heard indoors.

For more information on individual preparedness service animals and citizens preparedness go to:

<http://www.ready.gov/tornadoes>

Information, on what a service animal is go to:

http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

<http://www.ready.gov/document/are-you-ready-depth-guide-citizen-preparedness>